referred to as "Coptic", although the Abyssinian Copts prefer the term "Towado" meaning Orthodox. The term Copt is derived from the Greek term for "Egyptian." Since the Coptic Metropolitan of Alexandria, Egypt, was also head of the Abyssinian Church and appointed all Abyssinian archbishops until recent years of the reign of the present Emperor, there is some justification for the use of the term Coptic. It will be so used in this study, to indicate the "Abyssinian Church of Ethiopia".

In books on Ethiopia, one often finds the term "Amhara" used in a broad sense as synonymous with Abyssinian Coptic Christian. Although the Amhara in their ethnocentrism also use it in this sense, it is not good usage in the author's opinion. The Tigrinya-speaking peoples of the province of Tigre are also good "Copts", in religious belief and observance; however, they differ from the Amhara in many phases of culture, and, according to native opinion, in personality". Therefore, the term Amhara is used in this study only for the Amharic-speaking, Coptic population of the provinces of Begemdir(Gondar), Gojjam, and parts of Shoa. Formerly, all three provinces were included in a territorial unit called Amhara; hence the name.

B. Linguistic Definitions

There are three major linguistic families in Ethiopia: Cushitic, Semitic and Nilotic. Cushitic is predominant, roughly speaking, in the southern half of modern Ethiopia, including Galla, Somali, Sidamo, Agau, etc. Nilotic languages predominate along the northern and western escarp-

197 ment leading to the Sudan, including Baria (the term for slave in Amharic), Kunama, etc. Semitic languages spoken in Ethiopia (mainly in the northern half of the country), are referred to by linguists as "Ethiopic", and are derived from the Geez language which entered Ethiopia in the first half of the first millenium B.C.

Geez ceased to be a spoken language in the 14th century A.D., though it survives in the Abyssinian Coptic liturgy to this day, and was the language of religious, historical and grammatical documents almost until the present generation.

Of the daughter-languages of Geez, Tigrē, spoken in Northern Eritrea, remains the closest to the mother tongue. Its literature is recent, much of it due to the efforts of Swedish missionaries since the 19th century. The same can be said of the literature of the nearest linguistic relative, Tigrinya, spoken in southern Eritrea and in the Ethiopian province of Tigre. These linguistic and territorial names should not be confused.

Amharic, the present national language of Ethiopia, has 111 been important since the 14th century A.D. when the earliest 197 available Amharic document, "Songs of the Kings," was written. 538 The first scientific grammar of Amharic was written in the 17th century by a European scholar, Ludolf. Not until the 20th century has literature in Amharic slowly developed. Amharic is partly derived from Geez, but contains a strong substratum of Cushitic (Leslau, 1945 a). Amharic predominates on the plateau of northwest-central Ethiopia.

191 Other spoken languages partly derived from Geez are now 197 spoken only by small groups of the population, and are disap-

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pearing more or less rapidly, mostly in favor of Amharic. 191
They include Argobba, Adare or Hareri, Gurage, Gafat. 197

2. The Land.

A. Geographical Location.

The Empire of Ethiopia(south of Eritrea) is located in 131
the northeastern part of Africa, roughly between 5° and 15° north latitude, and 33° -43° east longitude. Prior to the federation of Eritrea in 1952, which added about 45,000 sq. miles and brought access to the Red Sea, Ethiopia had 350,000 sq. miles of landlocked territory. It was roughly the size of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

It is a mountainous kingdom, separated from the Red Sea 133
and the Gulf of Aden on the northeast and the Indian Ocean on the southeast by hot lowland deserts; a steep escarpment borders all along the western area down to the hot lowland of the Sudan. This mountain fortress type of landscape has enabled the plateau people to retain their independence against would-be invaders.

Today the political territory of Ethiopia is divided into 631
12 administrative provinces (Taqlai Gezat), each under a Governor-General appointed by the Emperor. Each province is subdivided into several(usually six) sub-provinces (Awrajja Gezat), ruled by a governor similarly appointed.

Three of the 12 provinces are Amharic-speaking; the 191
national language has recently become the lingua franca for the larger centers of population in the other provinces also.

B. Climate, Climatic Zones, and Topography. 132

Climate and topography are closely inter-related in

212 Communication among the Amhara can be said to be formal on all
195 matters of culture focus. Writing is regarded by the Amhara as relegated to formal use, and schoolboys were penalized for experimenting with it informally. Language, however, being oral and thus less controllable, compensates for this; and artistic expression and experimentation make free and often playful and inventive use of the lexical, grammatical, and syntactical raw material of language.

A. The Raw Material of the Amharic Language Put to Use.

a) Historical Development

197 Much of the lexical matter and most of the grammar of the Amharic language, also the basis of the alphabet that it uses, are derived from Geez, one of the South Arabian languages of about 500 B.C. The term "lisana Geez" the language of the Geez, has, among Abyssinians, the connotation of "language of the free men", i.e. conquerors. Linguistic scholars have raised the question whether one single language, Geez, was imported from Southern Arabia about that time, or whether different, possibly related, languages came from there via separate channels at different times. The latter theory seems more likely, and Amharic may owe the Semitic part of its character to a sister language of Geez, rather than to Geez itself (footnote 85). But the Amhara firmly believe in the derivation from Geez itself - and directly.

197 Whether directly or indirectly derived originally, certain it is
192 that for many centuries and quite consciously even today, the Amhara have been borrowing freely and proudly from the Geez language any term useful particularly to express abstract concepts, in which Amharic is

Footnote 85 - Theory of Professor Marcel Cohen, quoted by Leslau Archaic Features in South Ethiopia. (See Bibliography).

197 192 sometimes poor, but Geez very rich. In fact, linguistic purists among modern-nationalistic educated Amharas, urge rejection of foreign loan-words in favor of continued and even revived borrowing from Geez cognates.

212 The Amharic script, largely derived from ancient Sabean characters, is, unlike other Semitic scripts, written from left to right. The characters are syllabic, based on 26 consonants from Geez, plus 4 labiovelar diphthongs, plus 7 additional consonants added in Amharic and called "yäärab fidäl" (lit. the Arabic alphabet). These 37 consonants in Amharic are always written in syllabic form, combined with one of 7 vowal orders, so that students must learn a syllabic alphabet of 259 characters. There are also 20 symbols for numerals, which are still taught, and even printed in the modern press, and not replaced by the simpler Arabic numerals; though the latter have been recently taught. These characters and numerals are now printed on a sheet that also includes the Gospel of St. John, in Geez, and a photograph of Emperor Haile Selassie; pasted on a cardboard, this sheet is now carried to school by the young students.

197 192 Amharic also derives a considerable part of its raw material from Cushitic languages spoken in Ethiopia prior to (and after) the Semitic colonization, perhaps more so than any other Abyssinian language (footnote 86). From these Cushitic sources Amharic obtains part of its vocabulary (especially most of its terms relating to concrete matters),

Footnote 86 - Leslau: Southeast Semitic
Leslau: Observations on Gurage Documents
Leslau: Review of Cohen's Nouvelles Etudes d'Ethiopien Meridional
Cohen, M.: Traité de la Langue Amharique
Houghton: Aspects of Amharic

197 192 most of its syntax, morphology (such as the "frequentative"), phonology such as considerable onomatopoetry and monosyllabic words (though some of these may have been carried in Geez also). The result of this linguistic blend is a number of expressive choices somewhat analogous to the choice in English between Anglo-Saxon cognates and Latin-French cognates: e.g. the word "sun" can be expressed as "sahay" (from Geez) or "jembar" (from Cushitic). Amhara people use these alternates in many ways: to emphasize distinction between "sacred" and "profane", between the philosophic and the prosaic.

578 197 186 For, to the mind of the Amhara, Geez and its derivatives are spiritually connected with the church liturgy, with philosophy. Even in the present situation of change, feudal conservatives and the church have banded together most strongly against the suggested simplification of the Amharic alphabet (which is recommended for quicker learning, especially by illiterate adults of other ethnic groups in Ethiopia; and for devising typewriters). This traditional, religious conservatism is now being reinforced by the new and incipient group of nationalistic, linguistic purists, who bemoan the introduction of more and more European cognates. But the latter group is still small and does not have nearly the political power of the old-style religious conservatives.

197 Finally, the often-repeated qualification with regard to the effect of regional differences applies to linguistic matters also. In different regions, derivations from different Cushitic languages affect all phases of the language, particularly the lexical.

192 b) Lexical, Grammatical and Syntactical Phases.

The Amharic vocabulary is rich in onomatopoetic terms which have been formalized:

193 (E.g. instead of "the man who came", Amharic constructs the sentence "who came the man".)

212 Orthography shows considerable ambivalence of choice, perhaps due to the later influences of Arabic and to the Amharic additions to the Geez alphabet. Thus, interchanges of "q" and "g", "t" and "t", "n" and "n" are common among consonants; "i" and "i"; "e" and "e" and "a" somewhat less commonly exchanged among vowels. This confuses the root, vowel and tense indications for the foreigner, and even Amharic-speakers when discussing a matter not commonly discussed, may misunderstand each other because of these interchanges, especially if they come from different regions.

c) Regional Variations.

•197 Part of the wide variety of regional linguistic differences among Amharic-speakers is due to the long, conservative, provincial semi-isolation. Some of this is not much different from provincialisms in rural Europe; so that the pronounciation of even common words such as "aydollïm" (he isn't here) identifies the Amhara from Shoa, "aydallïm" from Begemdir province (Gondar). But a much greater part of the regional differences is due to the fact that for many centuries, perhaps millenia, the Amharic speakers of Begemdir (Gondar) and Gojjam provinces have been exposed to "old-Cushitic" languages such as Agau, while the Amhara of Shoa province has been exposed to "new-Cushitic" languages such as Galla.

The Abyssinian of Tigre province, whose "Tigre" or "Tigrinya" language may be a closer derivative of Geez than Amharic, has long maintained Semitic ties through continued influence of developing Arabic from Yemen and the Red Sea, and has in turn affected the inland Amharic of Semyen-Begemdir, whose people shared Abyssinian religion and culture. Western Amharas, e.g. in Gojjam province, but also in the trading center of Gondar, have been affected by vulgate Arabic spoken

197 in the neighboring Sudan, for Muslim traders even today mix more Arabic loanwords into their Amharic than do Amharas. Areas conquered by slightly islamized Galla and held from the 16th to the 19th centuries were affected to varying degrees by several Galla (Cushitic) dialects.

196 Semantic drift is now in the direction of the Amharic speech pattern of Shoa province, which replaces the dominance of former aristocratic Gondar, thus introducing many more Galla traits into the language. This change is concomitant with the increasing political [191] dominance and centralization of the Shoan dynasty and power. Proclamations emanate from Addis Ababa in Shoan Amharic, and schoolchildren are increasingly taught this "standard" Amharic. Old terms of other provinces are often falling into disuse.

Sometimes this process is conscious, particularly in matters of national pride. Thus, the old word "tugul" for the primitive, round, thatched, wattle-and-mud hut, is now replaced, through influence directed from Addis Ababa, by "sar byet" (lit. thatched house), considered more polite, for it denotes a house not yet covered by a corrugated iron roof, without the connotation of the mud walls; or, for similar reasons, by "goja" (lit. simple residence).

The use of the call "Gurage" for laborer has been expressly forbidden, because it is now considered insulting to that hardworking ethnic group, and the call "coolie" has been purposely imported. Furthermore, increased use is made in Shoan Amharic of Geez abstracts for modern purposes, such as the suffix "nit", which can be attached [178] to any Amharic verb to render it into an abstraction. Modernization, which has recently introduced such new cultural phenomena into Addis Ababa as the adult, unmarried "Miss", has, within the past decade, amended an old term to describe the new phenomenon: the old "woyzaro" (married, noble lady; Mrs.) is amended to the new concept "woyzarit" (adult though unmarried Miss). This term is still unknown in the rural

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

of Semitic blood. There is rather more of the Semite in the Tigraian and the Amhara than in the Shoan and the Gojjami. The Tigraian language has come much under Semitic influences, and there are many common elements in Amharic and Arabic: not only in vocabulary but also in syntax. The Amharic alphabet, with over two hundred and fifty odd letters, is a very exact instrument for rendering the language. It is derived from one of the old Semitic alphabets of the Middle East. Amharic has many explosive sounds which often give the impression that the speaker is excited and indignant when he is not, and with the impatient foreigner this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.

Physically the Amhara is slight and light-boned with regular rather delicate features. He has quick almost bird-like movements and his manner gives the impression which I cannot describe better than by the word fluttering. The hair and beard has the characteristic Hamitic corrugation. Men often go iron grey in middle life, but seldom white. The hair of the women is artificially frizzed and dressed with butter-grease to fix it. This gives them a gollywog appearance.

The Amhara have the most charming manners and they like to stand on ceremony. They have a complicated social hierarchy and always dismount as a salutation to superior persons. They will also touch with their lips the hands or knees of superiors. At the same time they have the naturally easy and democratic outlook of the East; and the poorest man will expect attention and the right of access to a Ras, or even to the Emperor. The approaches to the palace at Addis Ababa were lined with sometimes quite humble people, farmers and soldiers, waiting an opportunity to secure the Emperor's decision on some matter.

To respond to his ceremonial manners is an easy way to the heart of the Ethiopian. At the same time they are quick to take offence and their shrill voices are soon raised in anger.

The frail physique and mercurial temperament of the Amhara is doubtless the result of the rarefied alpine atmosphere and of a diet predominantly of grain paste seasoned with strong condiments—which they vary from time to time with orgies on practically raw meat. But fragile as they look, the Amhara are, nevertheless, extremely hardy. They will sleep out in all weathers with nothing to cover them but their thin cotton robes; they are remarkable runners and can maintain a jog trot all day; they are like goats on the hillside.

I believe the Amhara to be naturally intelligent with a brain which only awaits proper training and development. During the five years of the Italian occupation, no small proportion of the population of Addis Ababa acquired a fair knowledge of Italian. I knew a boy of twenty who, in addition to excellent English, was proficient in Arabic, Somali, Galla, and Swahili. He came, of course, from Harar, which is a great metropolis for peoples from all round the Red Sea. Abyssinian recruits acquired a knowledge of Morse with remarkable facility.

When it is possible to overcome the linguistic difficulty and get on friendly terms with Ethiopians, they prove delightful companions, naturally kind, generous and friendly, with a charming sense of humour and often a nice

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

[pp. 1-57 have been omitted from the files.-
Analyst]

CHAPTER IV

SOME OF THEIR HABITS AND CUSTOMS

197 REFERENCE has already been made to the number of languages spoken in the country. Of these, the principal is Amharic, and of the Semitic languages of the world it is, according to Mr Armbruster, spoken by a greater number of people than any other, with the 212 exception of Arabic. Its difficulty may be gauged by the fact that there are over two hundred letters in the alphabet, and consequently the number of guides to the language guaranteed to teach it in half a dozen lessons by correspondence is limited.

I am bound to say, however, in mitigation of this apparently insurmountable barrier to learning Amharic, that these characters represent syllables and not letters, and are variations of about thirty-seven root characters.

197 The next most important language is Galla, a Hamitic tongue which is spoken and understood by all the different branches of Galla throughout the various districts inhabited by them; in addition Tigré is spoken in Eritrea, and Tigréin in the province of Tigré; both of these are Semitic languages, as is also the ancient Geze or Geuze tongue, which is to the Abyssinians much as Latin was to the English people in the Middle Ages.

805 But if their language is difficult their calendar is simpler than ours, for instead of having months of differing lengths, they divide the year into twelve

9: Coon D-5 (1933-1934) 1939 MP5 Amhara MP5
Somali MO4

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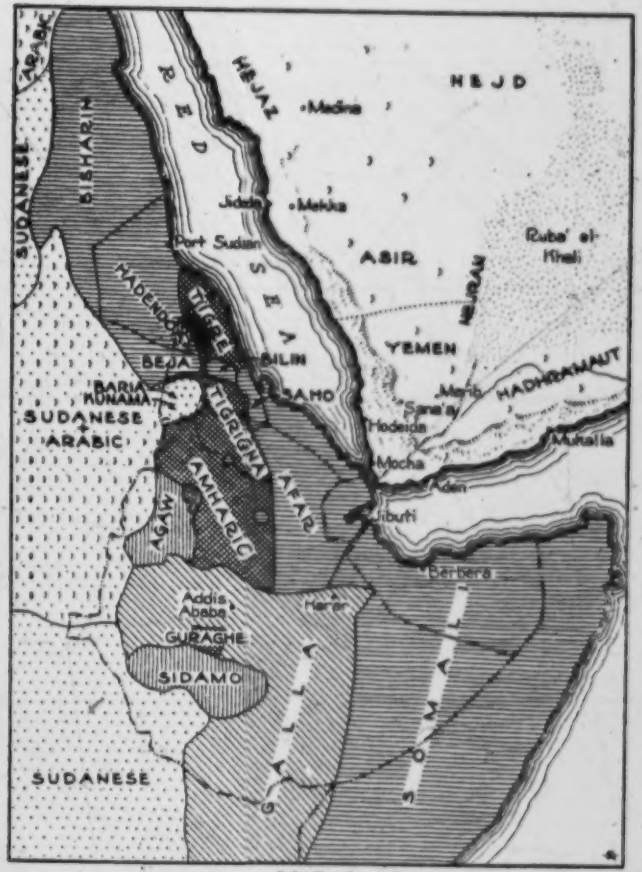

MAP 13

LINGUISTIC MAP OF THE EAST AFRICAN HAMITIC AREA

The Cushitic languages of East Africa and of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan are shown in parallel line representation. The Semitic languages of this region which are derived from Geez are designated by cross-hatching. It should be noted that Tigrigna is the language of Tigré Kingdom; the Tigré language, however, is a related coastal speech. Sudanese Negro languages are shown by means of large dots, Arabic by means of vertical crescents. (Adapted from Meillet and Cohen, *Les Langues du Monde*.)

000 The living inhabitants of the Abyssinia-Somaliland-Eritrea area may be divided into the following groups:

(1) *The Highland Cushites:* Descendants of the pre-Semitic agricultural population of the northern Ethiopian plateau, speaking early Cushitic dialects. The most numerous and best known of this scattered group are the Agaus, peasants and agricultural serfs living mostly in the kingdom of Gojjam, in the Lake Tsana country.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1

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[P. ii]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1
Tigre MN9

related to Ge'ez, the ancient and liturgical language of Ethiopia, much as Italian is related to Latin.[1] It was in Tigre country that, during the first seven centuries A.D., the kingdom of Aksum reached heights of civilization never again attained in Ethiopia's history. Because of the antiquity of their region and the glory of their past, the Tigre are to some extent the cultural aristocrats of Ethiopia.

The Amhara inhabit vast areas of what are today the provinces of Begemder, Gojjam, Wallo, and Shoa. Their language, Amharic, is the official language of Ethiopia.* Since the beginning of what is called the restored Solomonid Dynasty (1270), all but one of the emperors of Ethiopia have been Amhara.† The exception was a Tigre, Emperor Yohännes IV (1872–89), though he sojourned for many years at Dabra Tābor in Amhara country, and Amharic was commonly spoken at his court.

The differences between Amhara and Tigre culture have not yet been studied systematically. Even so, one can say that their differences are not nearly so great as what the two groups have in common. Language forms the chief difference. Like Ge'ez and Tigrinya, Amharic is a Semitic language, ultimately descended from old South Arabic, but Amharic has been molded to a greater degree by indigenous Cushitic tongues. Other differences relate to minor variations in custom, greater communal orientation in some Tigre areas, and differences in temperament. But the two groups share the legacy of Aksum, the Ethiopic alphabet, Ge'ez literature, Monophysite Christianity, similar political and social institutions, and the same style of life. One would be justified in treating their traditional Abyssinian culture as a unity, as virtually all authors have done in the past.

In this book, however, I have chosen to focus on Amhara culture as the dominant tradition in Ethiopia. This has been done, first of all, because of my limited competence to deal with Tigre materials, since I am neither familiar with Tigrinya nor fortunate enough to have done field work in Tigre areas. But a less fortuitous reason is that any serious account of contemporary Ethiopia must begin with the fact of Amhara dominance. With respect to numbers, true, the Amhara are in a minority: Amhara probably comprise no more than one-quarter of Ethiopia's total population (now estimated at around twenty-two million). Their dominance is to be measured, rather, in political and cultural terms. On the political side it is manifest in the perpetuation of the Amhara monarchy and the preponderance of Amhara in top political offices. On the cultural side it appears in the spread of Amhara customs throughout the empire by officials, soldiers, settlers, and teachers, and in

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* English is the second official language.

† A number of Amhara emperors since the mid-eighteenth century were partly of Galla stock, however.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

5 / *Tradition and Modernization*

THE GENIUS OF AMHARA CULTURE

The Amhara as a whole are not much given to aesthetic concerns. They are practical-minded peasants, austere religionists, and spirited warriors. Their interests and achievements as a nation are chiefly in the spheres of military activity and government. And yet, if we seek some theme with which to gain an entree into the spirit of their society and culture, we will do well to attend to the sphere of poetry. For it is a poetic phenomenon—that represented by the title of this book—which constitutes both a key to the genius of Amhara culture and a highly distinctive Amhara contribution to Ethiopian culture.

Sam-ennā warq ("wax and gold") is the formula used by the Amhara to symbolize their favorite form of verse. It is a form built of two semantic layers. The apparent, figurative meaning of the words is called "wax"; their more or less hidden actual significance is the "gold."

In its generic sense, the expression *sam-ennā warq* refers to a number of poetic figures which embody this twofold meaning. The use of such figures distinguishes the Amhara equivalent of true poetry from ordinary verse, in which everyday language is merely embellished with rhyme and rhythm. In the genre known as *qenē*, the original and more elegant kind of *sam-ennā warq* poetry, the lines are composed in Ge'ez and depend primarily on religious symbolism. But *sam-ennā warq* constructions also appear in some types of secular verse in the vernacular Amharic and, indeed, at times inform Amharic conversation.

Masters of the art of *qenē* composition have analyzed these poetic figures into about a dozen different types.[4] *Sam-ennā warq* in its more specific sense refers to one of these types of figures—the prototype of them all. It consists of an explicit comparison in which the subjects being compared—the wax and gold—are presented in apposition, while their predicates are rendered jointly by a single verb which carries both a wax and a gold meaning. (This terminology is derived from the work of the goldsmith, who constructs a clay mold around a form created in wax and then, draining the wax, pours the molten gold into that form.) So, for example, if the poet's aim is to praise a hero like Emperor Menelik, he creates a wax model, like "the lion," in terms of whose actions the gold, Menelik, is depicted: "The lion Menelik crushed the wolf Italy."[5]

Keeping this dual imagery consistent throughout the stanza is a primary rule of wax-and-gold composition. A poet who mixes his metaphors is sometimes rebuked with the epithet "hermaphrodite." The following example presents an Amharic couplet which properly embodies the *sam-ennā warq* figure:

Etsa balas balto addām kanfareshe
Madhānē alam lebē tasaqala-leshe.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1

TRADITION AND MODERNITY

AE 121 195 538

Insofar as Ethiopia is committed to the pursuit of modernity, she cannot fail to be embarrassed to some extent by the wax-and-gold complex. For nothing could be more at odds with the ethos of modernization, if not with its actuality, than a cult of ambiguity.[9]

It is true, of course, that cultural formations analogous to wax and gold in their exploitation of ambiguity have been prominent throughout the history of the West, not to mention the whole non-Western world. The Christian tradition has always made much of parables and allegories. The classical teaching of rhetoric, following Cicero, placed great stress on the use of paradox; and a major philosophical tradition, stretching from Plato to Marx, has been founded on a logic which assumes that reality can be known only by combining opposite concepts and that any single term is subject to dual interpretation. The flowering of symbolist literature, to take a more recent example, created an audience as partial to subtle allusion and *double-entendre* as the most obscurantist proponent of *weṣṭa wayrā*.

Yet there can be little doubt that the pace-setting spirit of modern Western culture rests on a commitment to unambiguous communication. It is predicated on the proposition that A must be A or not be A. It was no accident that one of the more characteristic philosophical movements of the present century, logical positivism, should have had as its primary motif the desire to maximize precision in the use of language. For the decisive institutions of the modern world—technologies based on logico-experimental science, rational legal systems, and bureaucratic organizations in government, commerce, and industry—depend intimately on the unambiguous definition of terms and the utmost clarity of expression. Whether the task be one of constructing a legal contract, outlining a job description, designing a nuclear reactor, classifying genera and species, or defining variables and their interrelations, these characteristic modern activities are informed by the need and intention to eliminate, as far as possible, all traces of linguistic ambiguity.

EA 121 195 197 578

The incorporation of these aspects of modern culture into Ethiopian life must inevitably produce a certain amount of strain in a culture which makes such thoroughgoing use of analogy and equivocation. Indeed, tension generated by this issue has been manifest in a variety of ways. Among the modern-educated Ethiopians, one finds demands for greater clarity in the specification of responsibilities in administration. One finds increased impatience with the devious, equivocal talk involved in joint action of any sort. One finds a slowly growing disposition to structure and fulfil expectations in literal terms, and occasional outbursts of protest against the vagueness and the conspiratorial mentality of those schooled only in the traditional way. In order to escape what they feel are the burdensome subtleties of Amharic,

EA 121 195 197 199

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5 • Ethiopia MP1

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some Ethiopians prefer to speak in English in their offices. An alternative solution is proffered by those Amharic writers and journalists who have attempted to adapt Amharic to the modern idiom, replacing the florid, intricate sentence of yore with short, simple, straightforward declarative sentences —an effort that parallels changes in other countries, such as Japan, where an intrinsically more ambiguous language than Amharic in the traditional culture has been revised to facilitate more precise modes of expression.[10]

A 121

The opposition between the wax-and-gold complex and the rationalistic aspects of modern culture which some Ethiopians now seek to assimilate is of interest here as an instance of the more general phenomenon toward which this book as a whole is oriented. It is the dilemma posed in all the nations of Asia and Africa by the confrontation of their traditional cultures with their rather recently activated modernist aspirations. To study what is transpiring in these nations in terms of the encounter between tradition and modernity, rather than in terms of the more bland and less biased category of social change, is to focus our attention on a very important aspect of their actual situation: many members of these societies have suddenly been forced to grapple with a number of intellectual and moral dilemmas of great magnitude. The concepts of tradition and modernity are symbols to which they are more or less passionately attached. All of them have concepts symbolizing the sanctity of tradition, like the Amharic *hāymānot abāw* ("faith of the fathers"); and all have concepts symbolizing the goal of modernity, like the Amharic *seltānē* ("civilization"). And in all these nations the conflict between the two sorts of orientation has produced acute forms of disorientation, on the one hand, and extraordinary challenges to creativity, on the other.

Adopting this perspective for the study of "transitional" societies probably opens the door more widely than usual for the intrusion of the biases of the observer. For the observer's own attitudes regarding tradition and modernity naturally affect the order of questions he will ask and the kinds of data he will examine in making his analysis of the "actual situation." They influence, for example, how much attention he pays to the weakening of norms governing traditional kinship systems and whether he views this primarily as a form of social disorganization or primarily as a precondition for more effective societal organization. Accordingly it is fitting that we introduce the analyses to be presented below with a brief statement of the philosophy which guides the author's approach to these questions. This may be done most effectively by surveying the range of positions that might be taken. In considering the encounter between traditional and modern culture patterns currently experienced in acute form in most nations of the world, one may discern, at a high level of abstraction, these five positions: (1) the Traditionalist, (2) the Modernist, (3) the Skeptic, (4) the Conciliatory, and (5) the Pragmatist.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

than those necessary to perform their jobs. They do not attempt to maintain and build personal libraries, though there are a few exceptions to this. The three small bookstores in Addis Ababa offer only the most insubstantial fare.

Nor, finally, have more than a handful of private individuals taken upon themselves the charge of a scholarly or literary calling. Although Marcel Cohen heralded the birth of a printed literature in Amharic as early as 1925,[88] writing is still not very important on the Ethiopian scene.* The output of original books and pamphlets in Amharic averaged less than fifteen a year over the past two decades. The presses and bookstores distribute Amharic publications indifferently at best. Much of the literary impetus produced by the desire of many Ethiopians to write, and the obvious need for good writing that would address itself to the intellectual demands of the present generation, has been sapped by economic, political, and cultural factors.

The economic factors include the high cost of printing; the diminutive market; and the absence of publishing houses. If an author wants to be read, he must normally pay for publication himself. Those who cannot must either find a patron in the Crown—frequently a highly lucrative arrangement—or resort to mimeographic duplication, or else remain unpublished. The censorship system and anxiety about spontaneous expression of any sort which has been fostered by prevailing political conditions constitute additional obstacles to literary development.

The paucity of serious writing has been the result no less of prevailing cultural conditions. The low intellectual level of his potential audience, the absence of channels for criticism, and the dearth of precedent make it difficult for the Ethiopian writer to determine good standards of writing. The confused state of Amharic, owing to regional variations and the absence of consensus on neologisms and loan words for expressing modern concepts, poses many problems on the level of sheer vocabulary. The temptation to get into print quickly, if the financial and political barriers can be hurdled, exceeds the temptation to work long and hard on an opus of quality. The desire to pontificate frequently eclipses the quest for understanding.

Those conditions which have inhibited the growth of Amharic literature—poverty, governmental reluctance to provide sufficient freedom and support, the newness of the modernizing culture, and the motivational level of the intellectuals themselves—may be viewed more broadly as responsible for the relative barrenness of Ethiopian intellectual life as a whole. Insofar as these conditions change in the coming decades, a radical change in the quality and organization of Ethiopian intellectual life may be expected. As a sociological

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* This is no longer due, however, to the negative attitude toward writing as such which was discussed in chapter iii. That traditional inhibition has been largely removed—primarily, it seems, by the postwar requirement that all legal accusations and court proceedings be set down in writing.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*121 181 571 Our people always speak indirectly, in secrets. For example, a man will come, asking for the glass he loaned another man. The debtor says he will bring it in a week, that it has been broken and he will send for a new one. The man may say: "Oh, never mind. It doesn't matter to me, don't bother." The debtor will then be scared; thinking that the owner of the glass is in his stomach quite angry and ready to kill him, he will take his gun and get the man first.[16]

The suspiciousness which so colors interaction among the Amhara has been viewed by some observers primarily as an adaptive response to some very real dangers with which Ethiopia has chronically been confronted: the threat of conversion to Western forms of Christianity by European missionaries, the threat of European imperialism, and the threat of encirclement and occupation by a militant Islam. These factors have undoubtedly intensified the apprehensiveness of Ethiopia's leaders and strengthened the much publicized xenophobic attitude of the Amhara people, just as the proliferation of security networks during the postliberation period has intensified the generalized distrust on the domestic scene. But these attitudes flourish as they do because they are nurtured on the soil of a basic disinclination to trust one another that is endemic in traditional Amhara culture.

That culture is marked, *au fond*, by a sense of despair about the possibilities of concord and enduring consensus among men, and, in more practical terms, by a realization that people who spend so much of their time deceiving one another are not to be trusted very much. *Sawen mämman bakantu naw* ("it is futile to trust in man")—so runs an Amharic epigram sometimes woven ornamentally into wool rugs; and it carries a secular-practical as well as a religious-speculative meaning. This disposition is institutionalized in the custom of *wäss*, according to which any sort of civil transaction—hiring a man as a servant, or lending money, or litigating in court—involves as one of the first steps the securing of a *wäss*, or "guarantor," who agrees to make good for any damages caused by the man he is backing.[17] It also appears in the custom of continually challenging the assertions made by someone who is relating an episode, so that the speaker is forced to interlard his narration with oaths that swear by the truth of what he is saying. The Amhara tendency to "overinterpret" and impute deception appears in their conception of the very origins of their language, for informed traditional Amhara commonly believe that Amharic originated as a secret language during the reign of the legendary Falasha Queen Yodit.

[173]

*121 181 571 • 198 A penchant for *secrecy* is pronounced among the Amhara and constitutes still another aspect of the individualistic disposition. In culturally elaborated forms it appears in the predilection for employing secret languages, including the argots of merchants, minstrels, and *zär* victims,[18] and the secret language

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

of shepherds,[19] as well as the secret formulae of magicians, the obscurantist constructions of wax and gold, and the use of Ge'ez itself in the presence of illiterates. Related to this is the great popularity of riddle games among Amhara. Personal relations, moreover, are consciously predicated on the harboring of secrets, or *mĭsṭir*. The Amhara assume that it is improper to reveal oneself fully, to disclose one's *mĭsṭir*, to anyone but a very close friend; and that, in fact, rarely happens.

Given the weakness of horizontal forms of cohesion among the Amhara—sociability at mealtime, stylized politeness among equals, and co-operation in time of crisis, important though they are, cannot contain the centrifugal forces just described—the dispositions which sustain a minimum of social order among the Amhara are expressed through vertical, hierarchical forms of interaction. Here both individualistic and solidaristic forms are in evidence, the latter in the forms of deference and begging, the former in the variety of authoritarian relationships.

Perhaps the most characteristic form of interaction among the Amhara is that of *domination*. The Amhara is at his happiest when he is in a position to order someone about. The sense of domination is marked not only in relations between nobles and commoners, officers and soldiers, masters and servants, but also between husbands and wives, and parents and children. Amhara children sometimes volunteer the explanation of their desire to have children when they grow up as based on the explanation that then *they* will have youngsters of their own to command.

Connected with the passion to dominate is a predilection for administering physical punishment. In all of the relationships just mentioned corporal punishment is an integral feature, particularly so on the domestic scene. With sticks or whips, masters beat servants, teachers pupils, husbands wives, and parents children. The complete acceptance of this pattern was shown by the fact that not a single Amhara TAT respondent objected to any of the corporal punishment cards. They all assumed that the punishment depicted, including that of husband against wife and mistress against servant, was deserved, proper, and would have a salutary effect. (One of the respondents even exclaimed when regarding one of the beating scenes: "What a beautiful punishment!") The only reservations expressed concerned the possibility that the punishment might be so severe as to wound fatally the person being punished, in which case the punisher would have cause for regret.

Whatever the functions of such patterns in controlling antisocial behavior and securing adherence to the norms of the situation, the sentiment that underlies them is primarily egoistic. The superior is interested primarily in having his own way and gratifying his ego through the sheer exercise of his power; and the motivation of the punisher probably often contains a strong

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

PREFACE

121 This dissertation describes the medical beliefs and practices of an Amhara population of northwestern Ethio-
114 pia. The field research upon which it is based was con-
131 ducted from January to December, 1966, in the highland area of Begemder province that extends from Gorgora, on the northern shore of Lake Tana, to Debark, overlooking
101 the Takassie valley (see Map 3). This region is occupied
144 by four ethnic groups, the Amhara, Abyssinian Muslims,
197 Falasha (Abyssinian Jews), and Agaw (former pagans). All
131 are racially indistinguishable from one another, and speak a common language, Amharic. North of the Takassie River live the Tigre, a people closely related to the Amhara and, like the latter, Coptic Christians.

101 The Amhara, who are the most numerous of Begemder's peoples, also inhabit much of the highland plateau extending to the south, into Gojam and Shoa provinces, and to
231 the east, into Wollo province. Most Amhara are rural folk
241 who practice a mixed agricultural economy, growing grains
621 and pulses; raising sheep, goats, and cattle. The Amhara
632 countryside is divided into parishes. A parish is composed of several hamlets whose residents live on dispersed homesteads, and share important social and econo-
369 mic ties through their parish's church. In addition to these rural folk, Amhara constitute a majority among the townspeople of highland Begemder.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

121 nally, data were gathered relating to the modes of acquiring, exercising, validating, and conserving powers of prophylaxis, diagnosis, and therapy. Here, as in the other areas of data gathering, a necessary distinction was made between the perceptions of practitioners and those of their clients.

*793 869 75 • 197 539 While the secular medical traditions of Ethiopia are exclusively oral, powerful cleric healers known as debteras have traditionally employed diagnositc, prophylactic, and therapeutic texts written in Ge'ez, the language of the Church, and in the vernacular. Numerous

*793 114 127 debtera texts gave been collected in the libraries of Europe and the United States, and valuable translations, most notably by Marcel Griaule, Deborah Lifchitz, and Stefan Strelcyn, have been published. These published translations, together with translations made in the field with the assistance of clerics, have been utilized in the writing of those sections of Chapter Four dealing with the debtera's medical texts.

121 171 Although the focus of this dissertation is limited to the region in which field research was conducted, it should not be overlooked that the Amhara share important cultural affinities with peoples, now largely Islamic, occupying lands extending from the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.

000 The highlands of Begemder, Tigre, and Eritrea form

753 131 133 821 grazing. Both highland zones are considered ideal for human habitation. While residents of the dega zone occasionally comment on what they regard as the uncomfortable summer heat of the weyna dega, at the same time it is acknowledged that the rainy season (kiramt) is more burdensome in the dega. The rains last from May to September and are marked by temperatures in the mid-thirties in dega lands and perhaps ten to fifteen degrees warmer in the weyna dega. This season is regarded as a particularly bad time for kurtinat (rheumatoid complaints) whose severity is considered greatest in the dega zone. Epidemiologically, the dega is also associated with a relatively high incidence of yinifas bašiyta ("the wind disease"), an ailment described in Chapter One.

131 101 161 197 144 Although reliable population estimates are lacking, the weyna dega and dega zones contain perhaps 85% of Begemder's people. These rural highlands are occupied by five ethnic groups, racially indistinguishable from one another and, with an exception, now speaking a common Semetic language, Amharic. The Amhara are the most numerous of Begemder's highland peoples, and extend into the provinces of Gojam and Shoa, to the south. Within the Begemder highlands, they occupy the area south of latitude $13^{0}30'$. North of this line live the Tigre, a related people who speak a cognate language, Tigrinya. 101 131 779 Both Amhara and Tigre are Coptic Christians, and from

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

162 632 433 463 of the town's total population, support themselves by working among the densely packed rows of beer houses and mead halls which are found along the approaches to, and in the vicinity of, the arada, the weekly market area. A portion of these women alternate periods of beer selling with work as servants in Amhara households.

632 779 563 [197] [167] [142] Gondar's Muslims include both Abyssinians (pejoratively, "Jabartiy", "half-caste") and Arabs. While the former are mono-lingual Amharic speakers and physically indistinguishable from Amhara, the latter are distinctively dressed, bilingual in Amharic and Arabic, often light-skinned, and either immigrants from South Arabia or the descendants of immigrants and their Abyssinian wives. [443] [442] Arab men are the town's most affluent merchants (who often make a weekly circuit of provincial markets with their goods), shop-keepers, and wholesalers. Arab women are secluded at home. In the main, Gondar's Muslims are residentially nucleated in Addis Allem, a settlement on the town's southern perimeter and contiguous to the arada.

632 563 463 [197] [562] A substantial number of Tigrinya-speaking people, predominantly Eritrean, live in Gondar. The men are employed mainly as artisans (carpenters, masons, sandal makers, tailors, tinkers), laborers, and ecclesiastics. Because of their relative sophistication, Eritrean women are popular servants for affluent townsmen, and as